

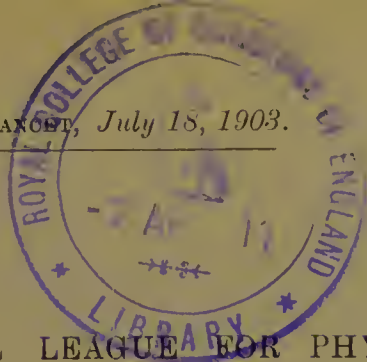


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## A NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—In consequence of your leading article in THE LANCET of Jan. 31st, p. 315, I wrote you a letter which appeared in your issue of Feb. 14th, p. 471. In this letter I ventured to suggest the appointment, with the advice of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, of a Royal Commission to inquire into the causes of the physical deterioration of the people of this country as shown by recruiting statistics. There seems to be good hope that such a commission will be appointed and that trustworthy information may be obtained regarding the three points especially insisted upon by Sir Frederick Maurice—viz., bad teeth, flat feet, and generally weak physique. But even supposing that all the necessary information has been obtained and that legislation has made physical training as compulsory as mental education in schools the desired end will still not be attained. Nor will it even be sufficient to provide good meals at a cheap rate, or in some cases gratis, in schools so that children insufficiently fed at home may be sufficiently fed at school to enable them to take advantage of the physical and mental training provided there. As Mr. John Burns very truly said in the *Manchester Guardian* of April 27th, "The father must drink less alcohol and the mother less tea, take more exercise, and suckle her children." The mother must also know how to

feed her children after they have passed their infancy and both fathers and mothers must learn the value of fresh air. They require instruction as much as the children but of a different kind. It is of no use to tell them not to drink so much beer, spirits, or tea unless the craving for these stimulants is removed by enabling them to get proper food which shall not only be nutritious but appetising. We must look to the establishment of cheap eating-houses and coffee-taverns and extended instruction in cookery as the chief agents to which we must trust for the diminution of drinking customs and to the instruction of mothers in the feeding and hygiene of children for the reduction of infant mortality. A great many agencies are already working for the advancement of physical education and health in this country, but for the most part each body works in an isolated manner and loses the advantages which might be derived from coöperation and coördination. The advantage of combined work has been so strongly felt by some of those interested in the subject that more than a year ago we drew up a draft scheme for a national league to promote physical development, but the sudden death of the late Lord Frankfort, the pressure of other duties upon others, and my own severe illness, lasting nearly a year, have prevented further action from being taken in the matter. The present moment seems to be suitable for bringing this scheme forward and for endeavouring to develop a "health conscience" in this country by the combined efforts not of a few medical bodies, as proposed by Dr. T. S. Clouston in his admirable address, but by every sort of agency, individual as well as corporate. In the draft scheme which we had drawn up it was proposed that someone in high position might be invited to become president and that vice-presidents might be found amongst the members

of both Houses of Legislature, whilst the clergy, the law, the medical profession, the press, both medical and lay, as well as educational institutions of all kinds, might be incorporated and united in working towards one common end. Such an association might be called a National League for Physical Education or, shortly, a Physical Education League, and by the combined action of the various individuals and bodies who would compose it much greater results might be obtained than could possibly be expected from their isolated action.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

LAUDER BRUNTON.

July 14th, 1903.



